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# California State Senate

SENATOR  
**SHEILA JAMES KUEHL**  
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT

CHAIR  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER COMMITTEE



## COMMITTEES:

BUDGET AND FISCAL REVIEW  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
GOVERNMENT MODERNIZATION,  
EFFICIENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY  
HEALTH  
JUDICIARY  
LABOR & INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## SUBCOMMITTEES:

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SUBCOMMITTEE 2 ON RESOURCES,  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AND ENERGY

HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEES ON  
AGING & LONG TERM CARE  
STEM CELL RESEARCH OVERSIGHT

NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DELTA  
RESOURCES

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IN CALIFORNIA

CHAIR, SCHOOL SAFETY

CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL  
SYSTEM

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
& MENTAL HEALTH

PERCHLORATE CONTAMINATION

## JOINT COMMITTEE:

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS

## SB 1437 (Kuehl): Bias-Free Curriculum Act Sponsor: Equality California

### FACT SHEET

Even though lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have made significant and indelible contributions to the history and social fabric of California, mention of LGBT people's role in California history and contemporary society is virtually non-existent in textbooks and other school instructional materials.

Currently, the law requires that the historical roles of traditionally underrepresented groups be included in the curriculum. SB 1437 would add the role and contributions of LGBT people. This necessary and affirmative inclusion will serve all students by ensuring that they get the full picture of the people and events that have shaped our society, and that positive and accurate portrayals of LGBT people are no longer excluded from the discussion.

As a society, we have learned from other traditionally underrepresented groups that invisibility is a dangerous and painful condition. Schools that perpetuate silence concerning LGBT people can be breeding grounds for the fear and ignorance that fuel teasing during the early grades and violent hate acts in high school. By middle school, studies show that many LGBT teens are inclined to truancy and get lower grades than their peers. Positive and accurate depictions of their community in the materials they study at school can spark valuable discussions and interventions, and improve these students' opportunities to learn, stay in school and eventually graduate. Moreover, the high rates of suicide among LGBT youth and hate crimes against LGBT people indicate that we must not wait until high school to begin to talk about the LGBT community and families in healthy and age-appropriate ways.

In schools where LGBT issues are reflected in the curriculum, results have been overwhelmingly positive. The 2003 Preventing Harassment Survey, carried out by the California Safe Schools Coalition in partnership with the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, found the following:

- 67% of students who have learned about LGBT issues at school said their school is safe for LGBT students, compared to 40% of students who have not learned about LGBT issues at school.
- Students who have learned about LGBT issues at school were more likely to feel they have a voice at school and make positive contributions at school.
- Students who have learned about LGBT issues at school were more likely to report that teachers treated them fairly.
- Students who have learned about LGBT issues at school were more likely to report that teachers care about students.

Many schools still express hostility against LGBT students, and it is important to give these students the same protections against discrimination in textbooks and instruction that other groups currently enjoy. By requiring affirmative inclusion of LGBT people and history in the California curriculum, SB 1437 would not only bolster the self-confidence of LGBT students, but would enrich the learning experiences of all students and promote an atmosphere of safety and respect in California schools.

For more information, contact Jonathan Snowden in the office of Senator Kuehl  
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